

Four Short Stories, Related Comments, and a Critical Response to
Henry James's "The Art of Fiction"

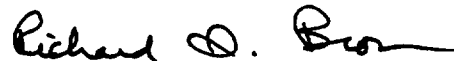
An Honors Thesis

by

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under

Dr. Richard Brown

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Richard D. Brown". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "R" and "B".

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What I Studied and What This Is

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This thesis is supposed to be a culminating summation and capstone of my undergraduate studies at Ball State. In my case, no project could be that. In addition to the wide range of liberal arts classes and Honors College classes which I have taken, my first two and one half years were spent pursuing a major in landscape architecture and a minor in drawing. Then I dropped that minor and changed landscape architecture to a minor. The final two-and-one-half years have been spent completing the courses for both a departmental English major and an English education major.

I designed this thesis project to fill the hole in my English education. Although Ball State offers several courses on creative writing, it requires only one, which also includes an examination of criticism. The section I took focused on critical essays, and my schedule did not allow me any electives. Consequently, I was in jeopardy of graduating as an English major with the intention of being a fiction writer without having written extensively with instruction. Hence, this thesis is four short stories that both stand alone and make a unit. For the benefit of those that do not consider original fiction academic, I have included a description of my creative process, my criticism of the stories, and a commentary on Henry James's "The Art of Fiction."

Chance Bringor

By the age of fourteen, Chance Bringor comprehended the superiority of his intelligence and insignificance of his existence; it made him a poor companion for lunch. At times he held the entire planet in such contempt that he would have destroyed every particle and vacuum without remorse, yet at other times he wept out of pity; either way I got his French fries. Stan wasn't so lucky; that's probably why he was the one who spoke against Chance on one of his rare absences.

"He glides up to the table and seats himself while serenely gazing at us with a steely look that says, 'I am the best in the world, yet I will join you for a meal and conversation.' Why do we let him?"

"Because when he's like that he wants to know what's going on in our lives. It's the only time he'll really listen if we talk about my band's latest gig or how short some girl's skirt was," I said.

"Was there ever a day like that when he laughed with us?"

"Well, no." He usually looked down his nose at us like we were stupid low-lives. "But he laughs sometimes when we try to cheer him up."

"Those are the days when he drags in here on sheer inertia and practically collapses on the bench under the weight of the futility of life. If we didn't try to rally whatever good spirits he has, he'd lose the motivation to leave at the bell and sit here 'til he died."

Don't get Stan wrong, he liked Chance; we both did, and Chance could be funny and daring at times, but Chance was difficult to deal with, and I usually left it to Stan. "You know he needs us; everyone else expects him to be the best. "

"Teachers, his church, his family, society, his classmates, and even and especially himself have trained him to balance on so many razor edges of choice that every moral or intellectual slip leaves him bleeding."

"Speaking of red stuff, are you going to use your catsup?"

Stan wasn't as smart as Chance, but he tended to think deeply and try to explain things by comparison. The only thing worse than listening to Stan when he got like this was listening to Stan and Chance go on like that. I once listened for a whole hour as they discussed communism by talking about geese; at least, **they** insisted that was what they had discussed.

"Chance can either dance in the spotlights of his brilliance or be incapacitated by the insanity of the deep shadows."

"He is capable of dancing in the shadows," I said before gulping my chocolate milk.

"What?" Stan looked like he'd poked his tongue with his spork. He's not used to me joining in on his word play. I took a good, long time to finish my drink and enjoy my moment of success. I knew more about Chance's insanity than he did.

Chance and I had had a class together without Stan before I flunked out of German. One day Frau Schmitt talked a little and then began to read to us in German. Chance wrote a few sentences then turned his back on Frau Schmitt to stare out the window at

winter's empty sky. I peeked at his paper to see if explained what she was reading, but I swear I never cheated on a test --unless it was really important. Anyway, his paper said: "Once upon a time there was a little box. It did nothing, and no one asked it to do anything. This made the little box happy. The End." By this time, some of the students were turning around to see what was outside the window and staring at Chance stare at the sky.

The teacher began stopping after every few sentences to glance at Chance and then at me; I shrugged. Eventually, she asked, "Is something wrong, Chance?" If he reacted, scientific equipment more sensitive than the human eye was needed to notice it. Bruno waved his hand in front of the staring eyes; they didn't blink. Frau Schmitt simply added her question into her pattern of reading and glancing. After the third time, she asked, "Would you like to see your guidance counselor?" Without looking to the left or the right, he swept his books under his arm, crossed the room in front of the class, and disappeared down the hall. She sat for a moment with her eyebrows raised in surprise at his silently rude departure.

Luckily, German was the last class of the day. The bell sounded, and I was out the door before anyone else had shut his book. The academic halls emptied in less than five minutes, and after a few more, I had just about *given up looking for Chance* when I saw Stan talking to a fire extinguisher. As I puzzled over this, Stan squatted. I realized he was talking to someone in the recessed area below the extinguisher. This made me feel better. It

also made me realize that only a loony would sit there, so Stan must be talking to Chance. I didn't want to startle Chance back into silence by suddenly walking up to them, so I doubled back into a classroom, climbed out the window, cut through the courtyard, climbed in another window, and crouched behind the classroom door to overhear the conversation. From my new location, I recognized Chance's voice.

"Help me. I don't know what to do."

"Do you have any homework due tomorrow?"

"Yes. Reams and reams of assignments, and I can't find my pencil."

"Do you need to use the library for anything due tomorrow?"

"Yes. History, but I lost my pencil."

"Do you need to get anything from your locker?"

"No. I lost my pencil."

"You can have this one. O.K. First, you need to stand up out here and wipe the dust off yourself." Chance giggled. I risked a peek out the door's window. I saw Stan extend a hand before I ducked back down to be safe; Chance would have killed me if he knew I had heard him **giggle**. "Second, go get your history homework done."

I heard the squeak of sneakers against tile. "Thanks, Stan. I feel better."

"Good. I'm glad to hear it."

That scene supported Stan's comment about "incapacitating insanity," but I had seen more. This time, Chance and I were spending the night alone at his house. We were in his tiny room

with the door shut and the stereo simultaneously playing classical music and Christian hymns; I can't remember whose idea that was, but I never want to hear "The 1812 Overture" played with "He Lives" ever again. That's the way things were sometime past midnight about a month ago when he started lecturing and raving and rhyming about blood. He started by mentioning the genetic probabilities of being each blood type then explained how blood was used in a symbol in a novel he was reading then related it to its significance in paganism and Christianity then he started to get poetic and rhyme his words and be philosophical and began explaining why blood was the only valid way to pay for mistakes and make commitments, and my eyes got wider and wider and I pressed up close to the bed to get as far away from him as possible, and I was afraid. I was afraid that if I stayed he would want to see some of my blood; I was afraid that if I left he might hurt or even accidentally kill himself. When he had calmed into a completely incomprehensible lecture on how Einstein's scientific and mathematical theories affected the religious views of major political figures in Albania, I escaped with a clear conscience. I don't know if he was sane because I never understand him anyway, but I knew he wasn't a danger to himself anymore.

After I had prolonged the moment of success as long as I could, I repeated, "Chance is capable of dancing in the shadows."

Stan looked like he was about to ask me to explain, but he suddenly changed expressions when he saw something behind me. I spun around.

"They're gone now. The superintendent just walked through

with Mrs. and Mr. Bringor. They ought to have the other children taken away after the way they've handled Chance."

"They love him."

"Chance had a well-developed sense of balance in morality, ethics, sexuality, religion, education, and everything else, and they have tried so hard to discipline and train and mold him that his whole psychological being is twisted into knots. Even their knots tie him into knots; his sense of honor tells him to love and embrace his parents, but his sense of justice tells him to despise them and distance himself."

I assumed this was another reference to Stan's Razor Edge Theory, so I said nothing. I, too, had seen Chance's schizophrenic relations with his parents. One week he would practically beg them to attend one of his ball games, yet in the next week, he might keep a parents' night secret. I just figured he had a pattern too fancy for me to understand.

All that was a few days ago, and I guess most of Chance's patterns that were too fancy for me to understand were really plain and simple desperate confusion, but I don't think that's what I should say in my speech. Stan has already written a good share of my speech, but I always forget his long sentences so I just say whatever I think until I remember Stan's next phrase. Stan said he and I have a responsibility to keep to the truth even if it isn't all wonderful, and I don't figure Chance would mind too much if I was myself at his funeral.

"By the age of fourteen, Chance Bringor comprehended the superiority of his intelligence and the insignificance of his existence; it made him a poor companion for lunch. At times he held the entire planet in such contempt that he would have destroyed every particle and vacuum without remorse, yet at other times he wept out of pity; either way I got his French fries. He could fascinate anyone with his mental ballet through the spotlights of his brilliance and through the deep shadows of insanity; I never understood a word he said. Chance could create the most elaborate thesis or solve the hardest math problem, but he might spend two or three class periods staring into space; I guess he was thinking. All he wanted was love, and that was the one thing no one knew how to give him because he wouldn't let anyone give it to him; there were days I should have hugged him anyway. The future promised Chance wealth, fame, and honors, yet he envisioned only the opposite: a long, lonely, and poverty-stricken life; I guess that's why he slit his wrists."

Lonely Heart Hoping

"Jennifer Edith Grossman."

The class snickered as the blushing freshman said, "Here."

Mr. Yeomahn looked sternly at the class and explained, "I'm not doing this to embarrass anyone. It's just that since I have to call the middle names of Dave Smith and Dave Smith for the official roll call, I decided to call everyone's middle name." He was trying to be fair and follow official policy, and as a new teacher, he hadn't figured out which policies to bend.

"Lonely Heart Hoping."

"Here."

"Your mother had a poetic soul." Lone merely glared at the bespectacled jerk who dared insinuate his name was unusual.

I sympathized with Mr. Yeomahn as he returned to the class list. Lonely didn't enjoy academics and only behaved if he liked the teacher. This new guy was off to a rough start.

After alienating himself to several other members of the class, the teacher told us a little about what the class would cover and who he was. As I listened, I tried to catch Lonely's eye; I wanted to prevent any trouble. Unfortunately, my friend's eyes remained riveted on our lecturer.

"After graduating, I majored in English at the University of Illinois--"

"So'd my maw," sneered Lonely in his heaviest, fake country accent.

"It's an excellent school, and I recommend it to any of you

considering college." I suspect Lonely escaped a detention only because Mr. Yeomahn felt one interruption was a fair trade for an unintentional insult.

Mr. Yeomahn was not a nerd. Although he was in his thirties, he still had an impressive profile and obviously belonged to a health club. I could tell from the confidence with which he moved and the way he smiled that he had the potential to establish rapport. All of this was lost on Lonely, and Lonely would be lost to a passing grade if I didn't convince him to reform.

Unfortunately, the weeks slipped by and I was so wrapped up in my homework and family and organizations that I never did talk to him. Lonely and Mr. Yeomahn continued their duels. Lonely disturbed the teacher, and Mr. Yeomahn sentenced the behavior problem to detention hall. Each considered himself the winner, but I saw they were both losing.

One weeknight shortly after our respective team practices, I finally had some time to socialize with Lonely. We had gathered at our friend Chance's house. Lone was uncharacteristically quiet throughout dinner. Near the end of the meal, Chance began explaining that his paper on how to read e. e. cummings's poem "r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r" aloud was going to be printed in a magazine called The Explicator. Chance spoke energetically about his ideas as we settled into his small, cluttered room. Chance sat on the floor and started to tag a tray of killed but unlabeled insects; I sat at the desk and absently thumbed through a Latin prayer book Chance was currently translating, but, unlike his usual response, Lonely did not play with one of Chance's

three-dimensional puzzles; he plopped on the bed and finally broke his uncharacteristic silence.

"Chance?" he said in a small voice.

"Yes," Chance gently affirmed. We both gave our normally boisterous friend our full attention.

"If I gave you some poetry, could you tell me what it means?"

I was so surprised and overjoyed that Lonely was reading poetry that I jumped up and smacked my head on the end of a shelf. The shelf tipped and dropped its items. This avalanche caused a chain reaction in Chance's overstuffed, closety room resulting in pandemonium. We each utilized our teenage agility to rapidly catch some falling objects and avoid others; unfortunately, all of our motions precipitated other chains of destruction, and near the end, a miniature brass replica of the Venus de Milo fell on Lonely's head. The proverbial dust cleared. Chance stood frowning in the center of his pile. Lonely and I flanked him holding our aching heads. Despite my apologies and even though Lonely crashed into the door frame while exiting, Chance ordered us both out of his house immediately and without further discussion of poetry.

The next day, Lonely rushed into English a few minutes earlier than usual, and whispered to me, "Please tell me what happened in Act II. I was seeing double last night, and I've still got an awful headache." It's against my policy to help people who don't do the homework; however, I figured this was my fault, so I started. To Lone's dismay, I only got through the first scene before Mr. Yeomahn entered the room.

"Why didn't you go to the doctor? You might have a

concussion." Hopefully, the teacher was listening to this so he would understand why Lonely was unprepared.

"We haven't paid the deductible on our insurance yet, and my mom just doesn't have the money."

"I can't believe that your mom refused to take you after you told her about the double vision."

"She only examined the bump; I didn't mention my vision." My silent look of disapproval made him justify himself. "If she saves enough money to pay for half the trip, her boss will pay the other half of the cost of attending a conference in Philadelphia. She really wants to go, and doctors can't fix a concussion anyway." Mr. Yeomahn's summary of yesterday's action in Shakespeare's play chased my thoughts of Lonely's finances away. The Bard requires my full attention, so Lonely wasn't on my mind until Mr. Yeomahn called on him.

"Please read lines 301 to 316 for us and explain it in your own words."

"I will tell you why . . . so shall my . . .
anticipation. . . prevent your. . . discovery! . . . and your
secrecy . . . to the . . . King and Queen . . . molt no
feather? . . . I have of late . . . but . . . wherefore I know
not . . . lost all my . . . mirth . . . forgone all . . . custom
of exercises . . . and indeed, it . . . goes so heavily . . . with
my . . . disposition? . . . that this godly . . . goodly! . . .
frame, the . . . earth, seems to me a . . . stale . . .
sterile! . . . promontory! . . . this most excellent . . . canopy,
the air . . . majestic roof fretted . . . with golden

fire: . . . why, it . . . appeareth!. . . nothing to me . . . but a foul and . . . pestilent . . . congregation? . . . vapors--"

"That's enough. See me after class. Finish the passage, Rob." The class couldn't decide whether this was some new way of mocking the teacher, whether Lonely had been struck with idiocy, or whether he suddenly needed glasses. I think Mr. Yeomahn made him read as long as he did because he was also trying to decide.

Luckily, my locker is right outside the door, so I was able to hear the conference by only casually eavesdropping. It could be argued that I could not avoid hearing the conversation if I was at my locker.

"Did I hear that you got hit in the head recently?"

"Maybe you did. How would I know?"

"Look, son, if you meet me after school, I'll take you to the doctor. Head injuries can be serious."

"I've got practice."

"Whether you meet me after school or not, your coach won't let you practice after I tell him about your head."

"Yea, whatever. Can I go?"

"Yes. Think about it."

Lonely stalked past me with a glare I knew was for the jerk who wouldn't just leave him alone. "Use his money," I instructed. Lone is rebellious and grudgeful, but he's no fool. He accepted the offer but gave his patron the silent treatment.

That night he called Chance and me over to his tiny two-bedroom apartment; his mother was at her second job. "I was looking for some music I wrote a long time ago, when I discovered

this old box in the back of the closet. Its full of poetry my mother wrote in college."

"She was a female English major. It figures that she would write poetry," I noted.

"Yea, but even though she works for a publisher, I've never seen her write anything, and you can't exactly hide in this apartment."

Chance assessed the situation: "You read some of it, and you didn't understand it, right?" Lone nodded. "You want me to explain it, right?" Lone nodded again.

I further conjectured, "Your mother doesn't know about this, right?" Lone and Chance both gave looks of scorn at my moral scruples.

Chance took it upon himself to remove my naivety. "Adults are not to be consulted. They are gatekeepers of privileges and necessities. They will always act in that capacity even if you approach them as a fellow human." On this subject, I knew better than to argue. Chance's parents tried too hard to control him, and Lone's single and overworked mother had to use what little energy she had left to try to discipline and instruct Lonely.

"I wouldn't have given them a look except that the top one and several others are dedicated to Phillip."

"Who's Phillip?" I asked.

"**Yeomahn's** name is Phillip. Remember? He went to the **same college** as my mom. What if they knew each other?"

"Lots of guys are named Phillip, and thousands of people go to U. of I. every year," observed Chance.

"Just read the poems! We only have another hour or so before she gets back."

That it did not alter Appearances or Perceptions Amazed
considerably,
yet it worked magic in a subtle way
causing neither anxious eyes nor plagues of grief.
indeed,
it banished Demons and Doubts while calling forth Strength
and Peace.
If it displeased the Master or entered by weak floorboards,
it matters not
for no comforter shall be scorned.

"Something immoral surprised her by comforting her, and she is surprised that no one else notices that she accepts this immoral thing."

"But you're forgetting one very important thing: the speaker of a poem doesn't have to be the author."

"But look at this!" Lonely pointed at a poem about a journeyman. "When I did that paper on the guilds of the middle ages, some sources called them yeomen. YeOMAHN."

"Hold on," I cautioned. "If we're going to do this, let's at least do it in an orderly fashion. Let's finish with the first poem. What's immoral and a comfort?"

Lone spouted, "Drugs, alcohol, sex, rock and roll . . ."

At that slight pause, Chance interrupted: "Was she raised by her father?"

"She had both parents," Lone answered.

Chance continued, "Was your mother religious?"

"I don't know."

"Did she have a mentor?"

"I don't know."

"Who is 'the Master'?"

"I don't know!" Lone yelled in frustration. Chance looked at him in disgust at his ignorance, even though Chance had to know Lonely really couldn't know.

"Guys," I said, "This system just doesn't work. The poems are too cryptic." Lone's frustration vanished when he sensed we were giving up, too. He reached into his pocket and unfolded a small slip. In a voice that was not a whisper but almost too soft to hear, he asked, "What about this one?" I took the slip he extended to me. Chance moved to read over my shoulder.

Mistakes, Bad Timing, and Followed Morals have brought
this sentence:
Solitary Confinement,
Ill Repute (satisfaction unguaranteed),
or Death.
Tears of Loneliness thin tears of Blood weeping from the
wrist.
Cry out at Injustice
for Faithfulness and Truth still stand,
yet Man will not stand by his Work.

"What are you getting out of this, Lone?" I asked.

"'Ill repute!' That's sex! 'Man will not stand by his Work!'
A man will not admit it's his baby!"

"Sex leads to babies, but some women would consider the loss of virginity 'a man's work,'" I reasoned. "Where do you see a baby?"

"Confinement," said Chance.

"The date! The date! It's dated six months before my birthdate."

That statement silenced even our breathing. Chance and I were considering the ramifications of our snooping, and Lonely figured our suspicions made his suspicions facts.

"Let's not get carried away here," I cautioned. "We don't even know if they attended the university at the same time, and even if we did, there must have been more than one Phillip there."

"It would be easy to find out the dates," said Chance. "I'll ask him, and Lone will ask her." Lonely and I nodded at this simple and prudent plan. "Did your mother ever receive child support?" Chance tactlessly inquired.

"No! Why do think we're this poor?!"

"He's just asking. Even if he only paid a little when you were a baby, there would be records of it somewhere. There is no point in leaping to the conclusions you two are willing to accept."

We spent the rest of the time alone hashing over inconclusive evidence and wild speculations. I understand why Lonely, who isn't very bright but desperately needed a father, was willing to accept circumstantial evidence, but Chance the Genius had no excuse save a gothically romantic soul.

I left with Chance soon before Ms. Hoping was due back. As we walked home through the brisk fall wind, which blew through our clothes in the dark night, Chance asked the rattling leaves, "Does **Ms. Hoping** even know who his father is?" A chill ran up my spine at the idea of accusing a friend's middle-aged mother of previous promiscuity. I couldn't picture her having sex with anyone --much less everyone. She was reasonably attractive, but she wore wool

and cooked broccoli.

"Chance, don't you dare tell a silk tie it came from a worm."

"Worms make existence possible for silk ties."

"People who require silk ties in the dining room do not allow worms in the house."

"My sister once mistook a caterpillar for a worm. After a period of trauma, it turned into a butterfly."

"I'm not sure a silk tie wants to know it came from a butterfly either. They're flighty and indiscriminate about the pollen that sticks to their legs."

At that, Chance laughed and said, "All right! I won't say anything, but if we should tell him, you will be the one."

As curious as I was about the investigation, my own responsibilities kept me from the issue for over a week. During that time, Chance and Lonely thoroughly and subtly interrogated their respective subjects. On Wednesday, Chance slipped me a note that said, "He graduated the year before the conception, but Lonely says she knew him." On Friday, Chance's note said, "He graduated with a Bachelor's and then remained for a Master's! It's possible! Please tell Lonely as he was not on the bus this morning." If he wasn't on the bus, he probably wouldn't come to school. Besides, even if he did come, I only saw him second period, and the one thing I refused to whisper in Mr. Yeomahn's class was: "Mr. Yeomahn may be your father."

Fortunately, Lonely wasn't present as English started, so I had nothing to worry about. Actually, I had Shakespeare to worry about. Characters were dying all over the stage in the last scene

of this play. Not only was I trying to keep track of the deceased, the causes of death, and the murderers, but I was also assigned to read a part. I was relieved when I read the last lines of the scene: "Take up the bodies. Such a sight as this becomes the field, but here shows much amiss. Go, bid the soldiers shoot."

"Bid the soldiers shoot Phillip Yeomahn for desertion," proclaimed Lonely Heart Hoping from the doorway. I had missed his entrance, but that allowed me to view our man's reaction. He showed no shock and moved quickly to the doorway. "Quiz each other over the vocabulary list for Monday's test on the play," the teacher instructed, as he nudged Lonely into the hallway and shut the door. The obedient fools stared to get out their lists, completely unaware that the drama of a lifetime --of two lifetimes --was occurring a few yards away! My classmates' shuffling and murmuring made it impossible to hear the conversation outside. As much as I longed to enter the hallway, I was stuck at my desk, being obedient, not learning my vocabulary.

A few minutes later, the two returned to the classroom. Mr. Yeomahn opened the floor for questions, but I assumed he meant about Shakespeare. In reply to my inquisitive facial expression, Lonely scribbled on his notebook: "Is tonight your shift at the restaurant?" I nodded. He added: "We agreed to talk over dinner. I'll make him take me there."

Even with a test and several important lectures, I could hardly bear the agony of anticipation until tonight. I don't know how Lonely, who was more directly involved with the situation and less mentally involved with his classes, could handle it. Somehow,

I endured school and even managed to listen to my mother's list of tasks for my shift. I craftily positioned myself in a booth to shell peas. Lone saw me when he entered and requested the booth I faced. He chose the bench facing me so Mr. Yeomahn sat with his back to me. Luckily, the teacher was so preoccupied with greeting my sister the waitress and wondering how the meeting would result that he failed to recognize me, if he noticed me at all.

"When I said your mother had a poetic soul, I meant it. As a radiant young woman in a teal silk dress, she read some simple poems bravely and innocently at a poetry club meeting; I introduced myself and invited her for coffee at the student union. Slowly, we began a romance. After two years, she loved me even more than I loved her. When she told me she was pregnant, I got scared. I wasn't ready for a family; I wasn't even sure I ever wanted to get married. I should have told her that, but it always seemed so perfect when we were together. Like a jerk, I refused to help her and even falsely accused her of cheating on me. I bolted. You probably hate me for doing that. I deserve it.

"The mistakes I made with Minna and you have never left my mind. I've been involved with other women and met scores more, but no one has ever been close to her in any way. I think I picked this teaching job in hopes that someday I might see her in the supermarket and throw myself at her feet. I knew when I got my class list that at least she had wanted me to return thirteen years ago. When you didn't acknowledge me on the first day, I figured your mother had never told you my name. As much as it hurt me to watch and not get involved, I didn't want to yank the

comfortable rug your mother had woven to cover the hole in your life. I'm an older man now, and I realize that you two were the only thing in my life that ever mattered to me and to God. I'm not a young man any more, but I want to give you and Minna all the rest of my days. Will you have me as your long-lost but now-present father?"

"What in tarnation are you doing?" shrieked my sister in a whisper. As I glanced around in a guilty panic, I realized that she was referring not to my eavesdropping but to my pea-shelling. As I had become absorbed in Yeomahn's tale, my pile for peas and pile for waste had become two identical piles of peas and waste. She then lectured me on my complete lack of focus and other beneficial traits. Although this prevented me from hearing Lonely's answer, I knew he would accept the offer wholeheartedly. Sometimes God's design in our lives is so plain, I wonder why clergymen stress the necessity of faith. An atheist might point out that Mr. Yeomahn caused Lonely and Ms. Hoping a great deal of pain for thirteen years, but they would be forgetting that pain is necessary for a caterpillar to become a butterfly.

Saint Imam

I remember walking the alleys of Joliet's east side on a warm, spring afternoon. The bus driver had silently questioned our judgement when we disembarked downtown, but he knew better than to question three obvious truants. We were truant with permission. Although we were technically supposed to return to the school if we finished the academic competition early, the three of us had opted to explore downtown. Lonely had announced, "If the three of us can't outrun it, outsmart it, or outfight it, we deserve what we get." Lonely oversimplifies things.

Lonely walked with a swagger, and Stan's head swiveled like a weather vane in a tornado; I followed deep in thought. With a roar and a squeal, a subcompact car whipped into the alley and headed straight at us. We jumped toward the walls and squeezed among the trash cans in time to avoid being hit. The car accelerated as it passed us, shot across the T-intersection, and continued straight at the brick building opposite the alley. Just before the car touched the wall, the car doors burst open simultaneously, and two boys dropped to the pavement. Seemingly in slow motion, the hood crinkled, the rear axle floated off the ground, and the damaged car bounced back from the wall. Only then did we run toward the boys. We knew them because they were on Joliet's track team. At the time, it seemed natural to help them, but in retrospect, I wonder why since they had almost killed us --possibly on purpose.

"Did you see that?!" screeched Lonely. "Did you see that?!" They could have been **killed!** We could have been killed!"

I couldn't stop myself from dreamily saying, "That was so cool! The doors seemed to open automatically, and they were ejected! As automatically as an air bag!"

Stan did the work that Saint Christopher had failed to perform. Completely calm, Stan spoke slowly to the driver, who had a bloody nose. "Jeff, are you all right? Can you move? Is there anyone you want me to call? Is there a rag in the car to wipe up the blood? John, reach in and engage the emergency brakes."

Until I die, I will remember those three diverse reactions to the crash: Lonely's overly emotional hysterics, my callous observations, and Stan's compassionate and practical approach. Although everyone says I'm such an athlete and such a genius with a gleaming past and shining future, Stan is my hero because he's . . . because . . . because he's so . . . perfect. Somehow, without being the best in any one thing and despite making mistakes, he manages to be perfect.

He's perfect, yet he's not conceited. Just last week, Stan was walking across the lunchroom not paying attention to where he was going. A friend warned him to watch out for the puddle in the aisle. Someone else called out: "A saint doesn't have to be careful; he can walk on water." With a headshake of denial, Stan muttered firmly that he was not a saint. In light of The Demon Episode, I really wonder.

Stan and I had chemistry with Iringa Xavier. She was mousy and favored concepts from the 'sixties, but Stan enjoyed conversing with her. Iringa amused me mildly until the tenth of October at 1:18. I had just asked Dr. Valeric whether the textbook

was simplified for ease of teaching or whether the authors didn't agree with the results of Fermilab's experiments, when Iringa dramatically gasped at the empty doorway, leapt to her feet, vaulted a lab station, and dashed for the emergency exit. "Open that, and it's an in-school suspension," reminded the teacher. She froze, obviously in conflict and terror. One slim hand remained on the handle as she turned her whitened face toward the room.

"Well, don't let him get me!" she wailed. Dr. Valeric had already concluded that she was suffering from delusions, but he was still considering what series of actions would most quickly return the class to p-orbitals. Some of the class muttered unflattering epithets describing Iringa, but I sensibly asked, "Don't let **who** get you?"

"The demon!" she snapped impatiently. "Stan, **you're** religious! Can't you see him?" Two fundamentalists and some Catholics gave the doorway another glance. Several students laughed outright. Dr. Valeric attempted a compromise between humor and logic: "He has to have a visitor's pass before he can enter a classroom, and I'm sure the office won't give a demon one."

Meanwhile, Stan, quaking like an aspen, formed a cross with his fingers and stood bravely between Iringa and where I guessed the demon to be. "Chance," he said, "don't you know a chant of banishment or some useful Latin phrase?" Naturally, my studies in demonology have included such items, and I uttered a common one. Several of the students doubled up in laughter, and I suspect Dr. Valeric hoped no administrator was walking down the science hall.

"Did it work?"

"Yes," said Iringa and Stan at the same time. She returned to her seat, and Dr. Valeric merely requested her presence after school. Even an experienced teacher like Dr. Valeric couldn't return the class to a productive state for the remaining minutes of class.

"Could you see anything, Stan?" I asked. "Or were you acting?"

Iringa spoke before he could answer. "You are as clairvoyant as granite if you couldn't see that large demon on horseback streaming with flames."

Stan sighed deeply. "Teal flames."

I never expected those hours reading Catholic and Crowleyan works to be applic--

"Stop dreaming! It's your turn," hissed Ellie in my ear. Although award ceremonies bore me, I was attending the high school's award night to say a few words about Stan. Being the Student Council Vice-president confers both responsibilities and privileges; this speech was both. As I approached the microphone, I gazed at the house. Beaming parents, hopeful students, and tired siblings filled the seats. Stan, already holding several certificates, looked uncomfortable. A blush of embarrassment or flush of anger hovered just beneath his skin. With a nod to the principal, I began.

"By no means does Stan Imam consider himself a saint, but that has no impact on anyone else's opinion. No matter how often he tries to convince us that he is unworthy of the title even in jest and that in seriousness it's blasphemous, the morally weak or

confused souls around him, myself included, believe he could walk into heaven at will. To further vex his humble soul, the whole community thinks him worthy of canonization in academics, sports, and social behavior --even those who have observed his wrathful reaction any time someone told him so. Stan's fatal flaw is that he is completely virtuous and adequately skilled in every area of life.

"'You don't know what I've done!' he often exclaims, but no matter how he is questioned or baited, he never catalogues a single sin or transgression. I've known him for years, and although I'm smarter by a standard deviation and older by some months, he's my hero. No one balances so many demands with such tact and efficiency.

"One cold November night, I called him because I had decided to commit suicide. I thought no one could understand my problems, but I called Stan anyway. I told him what I intended to do. After determining that I hadn't started already, he said, 'I'm exhausted from basketball practice, trying to help my sister with her homework, babysitting the two youngest ones, and hoping against reality that I can read a chapter from chemistry, study for a German vocabulary test, work those advanced algebra problems, and complete the study questions for the Constitution before I fall asleep. I just don't have time to talk right now. I think you should talk to a friend of mine named Angela.' I called her; she was also suicidal. She understood the problems I was having and felt so much better because I understood problems she thought only she had. Not only did we convince each other not to commit

suicide, but we each gained a valuable new friend and gained further appreciation for our old friend.

"That was the first but not the last time Stan amazed me with his ability to handle people to their advantage. Stan and I were freshmen on the track team when the coach sent the team on a run. The pack cut the corners enough to make the square route round, yet Stan ran the real route at the cost of returning dead last and far behind. A senior and I were talking to the coach when Stan arrived. 'Did you have some trouble out there?' asked the coach.

"'No,' gasped Stan, 'I just ran the route.' The coach nodded and never mentioned the matter. Stan's statement had justified his apparent tardiness without actually accusing anyone of anything. However, the senior must have considered it a personal attack. When the coach left the weight room with an injured teammate a few minutes later, this hulking senior accused Stan of trying to threaten his chances of being chosen team captain and shoved him around to get Stan to fight. Even as a freshman, Stan was well-built and could have held his own in that fight, but Stan looked the senior in the eyes and replied, 'I was just protecting my own image with the coach. You haven't lost your stance in the coach's view because all the seniors cut the corners. If you get in this fight, you will lose your standing because you would be the only senior with a record of fighting.' The senior took Stan's peaceful advice and was, in fact, named team captain.

"Not cutting corners obviously helped Stan because he finished in first place in the 110 high hurdles at the state championships last spring. I'm sure the coach will never forget

that day in practice when he timed Stan just to see what Stan could do. As Stan came over the last hurdle, he casually asked, 'Was that good enough or do you want me to run it again?'

"'Was that good enough?' the coach repeated incredulously. 'During a practice, he runs it in record time and asks, 'Is that good enough?''

"I suspect that Stan and God have similar conversations. However, this is a public school, so I'll move on to another topic: academics.

"To be eligible for this award, the student must have a cumulative grade point average of at least a 3.8 out of 4. Stan has a 4.0. He has earned an **A** in every class he has taken." I paused. "He has earned an **A** in every class he has taken. I repeated that to stress two concepts. First, Stan has **earned** those grades; unlike myself, he labors on his homework and studies many hours. Second, he has succeeded in honors classes like geometry and chemistry, physical classes like P.E., and artistic classes like drawing and ceramics.

"He has simultaneously accomplished high grades, success in sports, an active religious life, and a full social life while working part-time in his family's restaurant, yet Stan refuses to be named a saint or a hero. For this reason, I am happy to deny Stan Imam this year's title of Paragon Student of Plainfield High School. The Student Council President Ellie Smith will now describe the student who has been chosen for this honor."

As I handed the microphone to Ellie, I saw Stan smiling.

Dolmen Chewzez

I looked up from loving a marigold to watch Viola perform a cartwheel on the sidewalk. Although I wanted to caution her against tumbling on concrete, I said nothing because her antics proved that she loved each minute of life. I was loving this marigold and her and the slant of light on the campus library just as intensely and much more desperately because I realized how soon each would cease to exist.

She flipped her purple bangs back into her blond hair and announced that Dolmen was coming. The fact that he approached his girlfriend and best friend nearly twenty minutes late supported my conclusion that Dolmen simply took his life (and everyone in it) for granted. I was counting on Viola to change that.

"Sorry I'm late, guys. I was reading and lost track of time. You'll never believe who is in my Western Civ. class."

"Who, sweetheart?"

"Bernard."

"I wouldn't worry about it," I said. "There must be over a hundred people in the class. You'll never have an opportunity for a confrontation."

"Unfortunately, the professor has broken us into groups of ten for projects and discussions. Not only is Bernard in my decury, but I'm the leader."

"But that's good because the professor has already established a hierarchy. Your disagreements won't deadlock the group," I reasoned.

"No, it's bad. As the leader, I have to give him more than a fair hearing, and I don't want to hear him at all."

"Poor guy," sympathized Viola. "Let's go to your place, and I'll make you dinner."

"O.K., but first I want to tell you both that the black marble I wanted for my first assignment in Advanced 3-D Design arrived today. I've never worked with so fine a material, and I want my design to be worthy of the material and of showing Mr. Alexander."

"He's not your professor anymore. What are you trying to prove to him?" demanded our female rebel.

"I want him to think the best of me." Dolmen looked at her disapproving expression and weakly added, "I don't know why. I just do." To escape Viola's glare, Dolmen turned to me. "I'd appreciate it if you would stop by the studio and examine my study model. It's by the west window."

I agreed and betrayed the moment by not watching the lovebirds reconcile while they crossed the quad at sunset. As I walked toward the art building, I ruminated about the mysterious bond between Mr. Alexander and Dolmen.

A few semesters ago, Dolmen and I managed to take a drawing class taught by Mr. Alexander. We didn't say much in class, and the first real introduction he had to our personalities was the results of our first assignment. He asked us to create a stark black and white drawing of a subject created by our imagination. Dolmen's intricate ink drawing "The Bliss of Death" impressed Mr. Alexander with its technical excellence. However, the collage

included not only a peacefully reposed corpse at an Irish wake but also God, carousing skeletons, angels, houri, and a pleasant expanse of nothingness. After class, Mr. Alexander approached Dolmen and asked if he was enjoying studying at the university. With his typical disregard for the effect he produces, Dolmen replied, "I'm not really happy here, but I need to be here to get an education, and there isn't anywhere I'd rather be anyway." This answer seemed to sadden our instructor. After the next class, I was the last to leave the room because I had spilled the contents of my pencil box, and Mr. Alexander had approached me. He asked me if I knew about Dolmen: was he very depressed? was there something he could do to make Dolmen happier? I told him that death was Dolmen's obsessive hobby, and that although Dolmen was not happy, he was also not depressed. Mr. Alexander seemed convinced that Dolmen was suicidal and tried to keep an eye and ear on him. In response to this attention, Dolmen strived to prove that he had talents for this world by presenting his very best writing and artwork to the teacher even after the class ended.

Dolmen's clay study model made my head shake slowly. It was an ornate tombstone. A maiden with long hair and a flimsy gown reclined on the top. Her eyes were closed; her mouth was open. A drop of liquid ran from the corner of her mouth, and a vial rested in her outstretched hand. The side said: Juliet Capulet Love Completely to Live Beyond Death. I left him a note listing my favorite parts and suggestions for improvement.

The stars illuminated the path to my apartment, or rather, they would have if the street lights hadn't. My mind whirled with

ideas for my research paper, and my stomach rumbled with thoughts of dinner. To my surprise, the door was unlocked.

"Where have you been?" purred my girlfriend as she approached me wearing only an unbuttoned shirt and underpants.

"Certainly in the wrong place," I replied as my backpack dropped to the floor and the door clicked shut. Dalliance slipped into my embrace. Without breaking our deep kiss, I tried to maneuver us to the bed, and she tried to remove my jeans. Since the activities were not compatible, we fell heavily to the floor, where we remained.

A few minutes later, we were both lacking clothes and full of desire. "I hope," she breathed into my ear, "that you'll fill me with your manhood."

"No." She caressed my penis in a way that made me gasp. "It's not--" my voice cracked "--not that I don't want to." She slid my hand to her wetness. "I want to --oh!-- I want you --ah-- but I want to wait unnnn --No!" With my last particle of restraint, I lurched to my feet. "You know how I feel and why." Her aroused and naked body demanded my gaze.

She sat up, and took my hand. "Don't be a tease," she requested as she pulled me back down.

"You know I'll do whatever else you want for your pleasure. Just don't--" A path of skin chilled by the cool air on my wet skin reminded me where her tongue had been. "--ask for sex."

"Heaven hath no fury like a scorned woman," she playfully replied as she fiercely grabbed my penis.

Dalliance and I have a slight problem. She is a sex fiend,

and I consider It for marriage only. The number of times and places she has tried to seduce me grows weekly. I'm only human; my resistance grows weakly. The question is: should I end the relationship for spiritual reasons or lunge forward to live fully? I suspect I'm the successful student that I am because I would rather concentrate on psychology in the abstract than my own problems.

On the other hand, Dolmen is a scholar by nature. He finds group projects frustrating because he can't stand the thought of someone learning something he missed. However, he is always willing to divide the work to be fair. Bernard seemed to sense this dilemma and endeavored to vex his decury leader at every opportunity.

"He's driving me crazy! If I agree that each of us should read a section and report on it to the group, he says we'd do better on the test if we each read it all. If I agree we should each read the whole chapter, he complains about the work load."

"Tell him to go to Hell," advised Viola.

"He'd only say it would be better if we all went," he answered in a resigned voice.

I stopped mourning the disappearance of a dragonfly to say: "Cheer up! The field trip to the observation deck of the Imago Building will exempt you from your meeting this week." I wondered if Dolmen and Viola were lovers. As Dolmen and Viola continued the discussion, I tried to deactivate my block for impolite and tactless questions. With a surge of trust in our friendship, I blurted, "Have you two had sex yet?" They looked at me with

startled eyes. "With each other, I mean," I said to continue digging my grave.

"God, yes!" she exclaimed. "You haven't done It 'til you've done It in a coffin."

Dolmen suddenly considered a crack in the sidewalk extremely interesting. I felt I should change the subject since only Viola wasn't blushing. "Dolmen, how long have you been sleeping a pine box? Surely your parents didn't allow such a thing when you lived at home!"

"No, of course not, but death really didn't interest me until I was almost a senior."

"Why did it become interesting?"

"There was a kid I knew pretty well in high school who killed himself when he was a sophomore. It made me realize that death wasn't just for old people."

"Wow." I cringed. How could the same word describe an event that had permanently altered Dolmen and the view from the hundredth story? Because the Imago Observation Deck hadn't erected any tacky security fences to keep people from jumping, the spectacular view was unspoiled. Mr. Alexander and I had just emerged from the enclosed area, but most of the class was already selecting an area of the view to draw in one point perspective. Dolmen, hanging his head over the building edge, was directly ahead of us. Feeling playful, I called, "Are you going to jump, Dolmen?"

In the same stern tone that Mr. Alexander would later use when a student suggested throwing a paper airplane off the side,

he said to Dolmen, "Don't jump." Having done his duty as a chaperon, Mr. Alexander hurried over to a student with a question.

"Oh, really," snorted Dolmen. "Does he think me so unstable?" I hung my head over the edge, too. "What **would** it be like?" Dolmen's drawing for that day received a D because it looked like it had been done in ten minutes. I saw him work on it for less than five. Most of the time we were on the deck, he was staring over the edge trying to answer his own question.

Luckily, my schoolwork didn't suffer because I was trying to figure out what to do with Dalliance. Unfortunately, it suffered because Dalliance had already figured out what to do with me. I finally told her I'd have to end the relationship if she didn't stop trying to seduce me when I was trying to be studious. That was the night I awoke shivering to find her holding my sheets at the foot of the bed. "I let myself enter your apartment." Allowing her naked body to graze mine, she crawled over me from my feet to my head. As she lowered her warm body onto me, she whispered into my ear, "Feel free to enter me." How much more of this can a man take?

A few days later, Dolmen announced that he almost had the answer to the question, **his** question. "I've been pondering it and pondering it. Jumping off the diving platform in the varsity pool helped me imagine jumping off the building, but I need to look over the edge of a building again to really know what it would be like."

"What roof were you planning on using? All the campus roofs are locked."

"The art building's roof is unlocked today because the fume hood in Mr. Alexander's room isn't working. If I zip up there when the janitors take a break, no one will know."

"It sounds risky and pointless."

"You just lack a drive for knowledge."

"I have a drive for something else."

"Save your flirting for the girls. Do you want to come with me or not?"

I agreed to come for the adventure, and in that I was not disappointed. When our chance came, Dolmen stood at the edge and gazed down. "Dolmen! Get down! If you stand at the edge--"

"Shut up!. I can't think if you're distracting me."

Maybe, I thought, no one will look up. Maybe, I hoped, he would finish soon. Maybe it was inevitable. No one had looked up. Mr. Alexander walked out of the stairwell and exclaimed in compassionate surprise, "Dolmen!" Dolmen turned calmly to look Mr. Alexander in the eye then returned his gaze to the ground. I had never seen anyone so absorbed in pondering the constant wind, the changing view, and falling flight. To live to the fullest extent, he rushed to meet death. Dolmen made me suddenly realize how I can live most fully. I can't wait to get a pine box!

Afterword

The Creation of "Chance Bringor"

A few semesters ago, an instructor handed each student a slip with a job title on it. "This is your character," he said. "Write a paragraph describing your character." My character was a "high school sophomore."

Obviously, the student would be male because anyone who is not described as a female is a male. He would be highly intelligent and mentally tortured. Those were the instant assumptions. His first name would be distinctive and descriptive. It was not until weeks later that I discovered that Chance is not as unusual as I had thought. Chance began with a very special trait: he "comprehended the superiority of his intelligence and the insignificance of his existence." Then I was ready to write about Chance.

By the age of fourteen, Chance Bringor comprehended the superiority of his intelligence and the insignificance of his existence; it made him a poor companion for lunch. At times he held the entire planet in such contempt that he would have destroyed every particle and vacuum without remorse, yet at other times he wept for pity; either way I got his French fries. He was fascinated by the spotlights his brilliance promised him and by the incapacitating insanity that occupied the shadows; I never understood a word he said. Chance could create the most elaborate thesis and write the most eloquent essay, but sometimes he stared into space for days; I guess he was thinking. All he wanted was love, and that was the one thing he allowed no one to give; there were days when I wanted to knock some sense into him. Chance desired the treasures the future promised him, yet he feared he would live a long, poverty-stricken, and lonely life; I guess that's why he's dead in the science lab.

I had created a character dead. However, Chance enamored me.

He had a story worth telling, and I put it in visible form. I did not invent "Chance Bringor;" I only invented Chance Bringor. By sitting down at a computer, I made a story visible to the world. I paused before typing the last two paragraphs of the story because I knew they contained the death of someone I cared about. With a few minor exceptions, "Chance" has been unaltered.

After writing a story, I give it to as many individuals as possible. Each reads it and tells me what he thinks. If a reader fails to mention a part about which I feel uneasy or which others often mention, I ask him about it. After I collect numerous impressions, I may change portions of the story. Then I distribute it to different readers and repeat the process. This cycle continues until the story is due, I refuse to change anything, I run out of readers, or I lose interest in the story.

Although the location and method of Chance's death were changed to accompany the razor and blood themes, no one liked the last line of the story. Chance had to die; the narrator had to announce the death, but no matter how I altered the words, they satisfied no one. It is still the line most vulnerable to attack, but perhaps it is primarily the concept stated baldly which bothers people.

I did not yet wish to leave Chance. The copy of the screenplay which is included reveals more about the genius. His raving speeches are depicted in detail and his possessions are revealed. The surprising aspect of the screenplay is that the theme of blood and destruction becomes overwhelming. Most importantly to this thesis, however, the narrator was given a sex.

In the story, there are no direct clues and only one indirect intimation that the narrator is a male.

The Creation of "Lonely Heart Hoping"

The idea slowly formed that there was more to be said about Chance and his friends, but logic inhibited a realistic sequel. My most devoted fan advised, "If you want make a career out of writing, you have to stop killing your best characters." I do not kill them, but they do tend to die. Luckily, today's audiences accept prequels.

This next story was told by the same narrator. It accomplished some of the results of the screenplay by describing Chance's room and giving examples of his abilities and thoughts. Like the screenplay, it also depicted more of the narrator's homelife. In addition, it unmasked the narrator's name: Lonely Heart Hoping. Unlike Chance's name, which was created for his personality and fate, Lonely's name was a phrase I coined to describe a romantic condition. By christening the narrator with it, I mandated his past. Lonely could have been the heart hoping, but he was too young and that would have made his name impossibly appropriate. This story died in a computing accident involving a bad disk drive.

The clone, like many clones in science fiction stories, shared the same genes but evolved into a slightly different and completely independent entity. In the period following the destruction and preceding the recreation, the plan for the thesis developed: in the first three stories, each boy would narrate one

story about one of the trio so that each boy was a title character. As I was procrastinating presenting Chance's mind, Stan became the narrator, and through no decision but some design, most of the new information on Chance was dropped to focus on Lonely.

My readers attacked "Lonely Heart Hoping." They considered the dialogue stilted, the poetry prose, the narrator's identity ambiguous, and the confession too complete. I altered all of those areas, but because I do not consider the story completely correctable, I did not resubmit it to known readers. It is a well-preserved literary casualty in the struggle for improvement.

The Creation of "Saint Imam"

This story allowed me the least latitude because Stan's character had been generally defined in the previous two stories. In "Chance Bringor" readers learn that he is intelligent because he can argue with a genius, creative because he favors analogies, logical because he can put Chance back on a productive path, and caring because he bothers to help his friend. The perceptive reader also suspects that Stan's philosophical growth is slightly stunted because he lacks the time to get more information and, thereby, understanding. In "Lonely Heart Hoping" the audience learns that Stan is an earnest scholar and that although he cares about his friends, he leads a very busy life. Stan's authoritatively nurturing qualities and strong sense of ethical morality become more obvious now that we know his intentions as well as actions; it surprises no one to learn that Stan is

intellectually religious. Furthermore, all of our perceptions from "Chance" are strengthened.

Stan's last name needed to be religious. An imam is the holder of a specific position of responsibility in Islam. I asked some friends if they knew what an imam was. They did not, and here are some of their guesses and associations: "a sort of tribesman," "I'm am (something)," "the result of an immanatization," "a sound uttered during an orgasm," "a sultan," and "a caliph." I am not worried that the word has no conscious associations with religion for the intended audience; it is enough that it is religious and that someday they will see the word in its proper context and suddenly realize the appropriateness of Stan's name. Writers should be optimistic to avoid insulting their audiences' intelligence and to encourage growth for both readers and writers.

In its formative stages, "Saint Imam" existed only as Chance's speech. However, a story I had been writing about a demon stalking a student required some characters with the arcane and occult knowledge possessed by Chance and piety possessed by Stan. Although it gives "Saint" a supernatural flavor unshared by the other stories, it confirms any predictions about how Stan and Chance would handle the supernatural which readers bothered to construct.

Two aspects of the story bothered me. First, it is traditional in an awards speech to name the honor in the beginning and the recipient in the end, yet these events are reversed in the story. It suggests that something is wrong with Chance's speech. On one hand, this foreshadowing via mood reduces accusations that

I gave no warning for the twist. On the other hand, a foreshadowed twist is not a twist. Second, I feared readers would consider Chance's speech and denial more cruel than kind. Luckily, none of my known readers considered the story that way.

Incidentally, the dialogue between the coach and Stan about the run over the hurdles was an actual conversation I had the honor of witnessing Greg Prodel and the late Mr. Hunt have. Being overly autobiographical limits a writer, but some real events which are observed by few are so awe-inspiring, revealing, amazing, or otherwise precious that it is a writer's duty to commit them to print somehow.

The Creation of "Dolmen Chewzez"

The first three stories were an indisputable unit. The final story was supposed to examine the boys from an outsider's point of view or an omniscient point of view. I considered using Iringa Xavier, Philip Yeomahn, Ms. Hoping, Mr. or Mrs. Bringor, or a principal as the narrator, but I needed some freedom. Writing "Saint" had been like trying to play racquetball in a walk-in closet. Furthermore, my favorite subjects are death and sex. Death had been forbidden since it was unlikely that more than one of the three would die, and the trio was too innocent and too uninvolved with girls to handle sex.

Thus, a new cast of characters was born, and the scene shifted to a university. The story began with a nonsuicidal character obsessed with death, his curious bond with a concerned teacher, and his friend who strangles life in his attempt to love

it. The beginning was unknown, but the final scene was to culminate in the teacher and friend witnessing the character either losing to his obsession or mastering it.

Like two of the other stories, the narrator would not be named, but the main character needed a name filled with death. Crypt and Cairn were attractive but too blatant. A character's name has to be a name first and an embodiment of his essence second. I asked a convenient middle-aged, well-read genius if he knew what a dolmen was. Since he did not and I had not until I checked the thesaurus, Dolmen would do. Some of my readers objected to naming a young woman of the modern age Viola, but their objection was deemed unreasonable and ignored. The beautiful seductress was flippantly named after a state of carefree unproductiveness.

"Dolmen" was written in fits and starts. After the description of the study model, after the first sexual scene, after the scene on the Imago Building, and before the last paragraph, I got stuck. Previously, no story had required more than two sittings to write the basics. The issue was further complicated by trying to quickly switch from scene to scene and idea to idea without losing the readers. More than the other stories, this one has an interest in the practicalities and details of hows and whys. This is manifested in the explanations of how the conversations with Mr. Alexander were possible, why they are going to the Imago Building, and how they will get to the roof.

The most amazing aspect of writing "Dolmen" is the ending. I

wanted the text to be ambiguous about whether Dolmen jumped. I wanted to make it slightly more likely that he did jump. I wanted most readers to be unsure of whether he jumped. To my surprise, every known reader knew exactly whether he jumped, and they were all sure he had not jumped. Perhaps I succeeded all too well in convincing the audience that Dolmen was not suicidal. Perhaps my readers of "Dolmen," who were similar to but not the same as my readers of "Chance," reject that someone intelligent and sane would commit suicide. One thing is sure: at least temporarily, I have successfully stopped killing my best characters.

The Future

Because "Chance," "Saint," and "Lonely" form a unit, I would like to convert the two newer stories to screenplays. The result should be long enough to be a feature-length trilogy that would use the same core actors and make a fuller statement than "Chance" alone.

I am as enamored with Viola, Dolmen, Dalliance, and their narrator as I once was with Chance. Viola must have an interesting past to be so full of vitality now, and she would be willing to do the most startling things to shock her peers and authority figures. Despite the impression given by "Dolmen," Dalliance is more than just a sex fiend, and Dalliance and Viola together could surely set the campus on fire. Even Dolmen and the narrator, who have been fairly well explored in this story, have more to do and say and think.

Common Bonds

Although the four stories may appear unrelated, they share many things. Common bonds include exploring roles of teachers, four literary conventions, and individual consistent images and themes.

Each story includes a teacher as a minor character with a major influence. Mr. Alexander, Philip Yeomahn, Dr. Valeric, and Frau Schmitt teach the widely differing subjects of art, English, chemistry, and German, but they all share the characteristic of every alert teacher: they interact with students as individuals. They do this with varying degrees of success.

Frau Schmitt fails completely to reach Chance, yet Mr. Alexander becomes a compulsive inspiration for Dolmen. Mr. Alexander's presence may even be the factor that restrains Dolmen from jumping. Although Frau Schmitt does not cause Chance's death, if Chance had been taught by Mr. Alexander, it is probable that he would have lived longer.

Philip Yeomahn seems to fail to make an academically productive relationship with Lonely, but he manages to forge an intense emotional involvement. Lonely values trying to disturb Philip more than he values good grades; however, if one considers that a common goal of English teachers is to get students to read and comprehend independently, Mr. Yeomahn contributes to Lonely's academic growth by inspiring the boy to struggle with cryptic modern poetry. The whole situation confirms that even reluctant readers will attempt difficult texts if they want the information.

Dr. Valeric appears to lose control of his classroom and merely observe the crisis, but this is a misleading view. His mind is several steps ahead of events, and complete chaos might have resulted from the suspected presence of a demon nearby. Dr. Valeric **allows** the students to handle the situation while he defines the boundaries in which they must work. For example, although Iringa and Stan are allowed to leave their seats, Iringa is not allowed to break rules without experiencing the consequences, and she is even forewarned of some of those consequences.

Teachers are the people who govern the lives of teenagers for most of the day, and because students are exposed to a multitude of teachers, they have a wide range of possible relationships from which to choose. Therefore, it is only logical that teachers have the power to greatly influence the minds and lives of their students.

All of the stories share certain literary conventions. One, the narrator's name is not usually revealed within the story he narrates. Two, the title of each story is the name of the character most deeply explored. As a corollary, the narrator is the second most explored character. Three, all of the stories are told in the past tense from the point of view of an involved observer. Four, all of the characters' names are meaningful.

Each story includes a consistent image and theme. As the screenplay makes obvious, blood and insanity characterize "Chance Bringor." Religion and perfection pervade "Saint Imam." "Lonely Heart Hoping" focuses on missing parts and searching. Images of

death and sex accompany the themes of dying and living in "Dolmen Chewzez."

Stan is considered a saint by Chance, and various religious figures appear in the story. Saint Christopher, Saint Peter's walk on water, and the name Angela evoke Christian associations in the minds of readers. The examples of Stan's behaviors compile to create a definition of human perfection, a perfection that requires flaws.

The images of incomplete items in "Lonely Heart Hoping" is extremely subtle. For example, the Venus de Milo, which lacks arms, hits Lonely in the head. Other items include the unpaid deductible, the mentioned but never-present mother, the uncompleted homework, and the elusive meaning of the poems. The play being read is Hamlet, which features a son trying to solve a mystery concerning his father. Trying to explicitly explain the nuances of symbolism and connections with this story is like trying to knit a sweater with crowbars.

Although "Dolmen" includes such typical symbols for death as a sunset, night, and the letter Q, it also uses more intricate items to intrigrate sex and death. For instance, the tombstone features the unconscious Juliet, a reclining young female with an open mouth and a thin dress; readers should know that she is unconscious because she did not die from poison but from a later stab wound. Even if the readers miss that detail, Juliet triggers the story of Romeo and Juliet with all its sexual motives and death caused by living fully. Another example occurs in the final line. "I can't wait to get a pine box." A pine box is a coffin,

the bed of the dead. On the other hand, a pine box has already been established as the best place to have sex. Sex is the narrator's symbol of living life to its fullest and a general symbol of conception and life. The complete ambiguousness of the line is its key. The individual images and themes permit the stories to stand alone while the common bonds allow them to be perceived as a unit.

But Is It Liked?

(Reactions to Henry James's "The Art of Fiction")

Henry James boldly states in "The Art of Fiction" that the "only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life" (457). Barring the results of therapeutic writing and an author's sentimentality, that is a basically true generality. However, few fiction writers sit down to "represent life." More often, they create to earn money, entertain someone, achieve fame, or relate a story. James is more direct when he claims: "The only obligation to which in advance we may hold a novel, without incurring the accusation of being arbitrary, is that it be interesting" (460). If a tale is interesting, it must "represent life" because if it did not, the readers would be unable to relate to it and would not consider it interesting. Furthermore, if the audience considers it interesting, the writer will achieve his more conscious goals. "[Critics] would argue . . . that a novel ought to be 'good,' but they would interpret this term in a fashion of their own, which indeed would vary considerably from one critic to another" (459). Therefore, the ability to generate interest must be the common factor in definitions of good.

However, human nature cannot resist; having created something good, man must try to create something perfect. James praises this tendency, and even asserts that attempting to write a perfect work is the most laudable purpose for writing a novel (469). It has been suggested that fiction should be moral in order to properly

mold readers and their society. James sagely replies that "questions of art are questions (in the widest sense) of execution; questions of morality are quite another affair. . . ." (468).

Under the assumptions that fiction is an art and that questions of art pertain to execution, the definition of execution is critical. Execution may be considered the way the story is told. This obviously includes the order, the events, the biases, the points of emphasis, the point of view, the individual words, the construction of the sentences, and the organization of the text, but does it include the plot? James states: "[Trollope] admits that the events he narrates have not really happened, and that he can give his narrative any turn the reader may like best. Such a betrayal of a sacred office seems . . . a terrible crime" (458). Indeed, given a setting, characters, and a situation, only one plot should be completely believable, completely truthful. Of course, as James admits, that truth must be the truth based on the author's premises (458). For example, Tolstoy's usual assumption was that at least some people are good if given the opportunity to be themselves. Tolstoy asserted that the country permitted characters to be more natural. Therefore, when he placed characters in the country, readers still expect them to behave in a predicable manner but make allowances for Tolstoy's premise. "Execution belongs to the author alone; it is what is most personal to him, and we measure him by that" (460). Execution then becomes the aspect of the art of fiction which critics rightfully rule.

Every art has critics and scholars which insist upon categorizing and dissecting works within the discipline. James mentions that "people often talk of [description, dialogue, and incident] as if they had a kind of internecine distinctness, instead of melting into each other at every breath . . ." (463). While it is true that they are intricately connected, James makes an error by scoffing at the idea of there being novels of character and novels of incidence (463). Admittedly, they are part of a continuum instead of a dichotomy, but some novels obviously stress one aspect enough to be considered a novel of it. James claims one idea which does not hold the test of truth. He repeatedly refers to the English novel. Oddly, he rejects the concept of a modern English novel on the basis that, of necessity, one writes in the time in which one exists (464). Why then is it not obvious to him that, of necessity, one writes in the nationality in which one exists? The human condition is the same the world over, and with rare exceptions like The Phantom Tollbooth, prose fiction is based on the human condition instead of a language or "national feeling."

In addition, James mentions the correct subject matter for novels. He questions strictly applying the advice of sticking to subjects familiar to the author; he insists that if an author can understand a condition, character, or setting without directly related experience, it is "familiar" (461). James also observantly proclaims that a good piece of fiction can be about the simple and mundane or the unspeakable or obscene (466). This confirms his belief that novels should depict life accurately.

In "The Art Of Fiction," Henry James discusses the purpose of the novel, the role of morality in art, the importance of the execution of fiction, the categories of fiction, and the permissible subjects of novels. In the process, he states the obvious, the debatable, the agreeable, the disagreeable, the factual, and the subjective, but he flatly states at least one undeniable point: "Nothing . . . will ever take the place of the good old fashion of 'liking' a work of art or not liking it: the most improved criticism will not abolish that primitive, that ultimate test" (464).

Work Cited

James Henry. "The Art of Fiction." The Norton Anthology of American Literature. Ed. Nina Baym et al. 3rd ed. 2 vols. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1989. 456-470.

This is an adaptation of my short story "Chance Bringer." Although a few details differ, I feel the message is the same in both forms. Like all screenplays, this is a rough draft designed to communicate. If someone followed it exactly, I might view the film and decide that it was not what I intended. The following tips will help a reader understand what I think I want.

In general, I have printed only spoken words in bold, but I placed a few noises in bold so that they would not be overlooked by a hasty reader.

If the thumbnail sketch seems to contradict the written directions, believe the words because my graphics are not very accurate.

I have used color in the sketches when a particular color was important; sketches without color are not in black and white.

The sketches for zooms and other movements reveal only one frame of the shot, so read the directions carefully.

Particularly in the audio column, elements may be chronologically separate or simultaneous. In general, a capital letter at the beginning of the line means that what has preceded is no longer occurring. And indicates that two or more elements are simultaneous.

"All natural sounds" are not something to be purchased in a health store. The phrase means that any noise not mentioned but that occurs is to be included. For example, if the character runs down a hall, and his shoes squeak on the tile, the squeak remains on the sound track. As a second example, if a police car is heard in the background, the siren remains on the sound track.

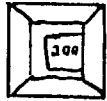
Although I have not announced the end of one scene and the beginning of another, a new scene typically begins on a new page. I am not trying to equate film and the theater, but my software asked me to make divisions somewhere.

A

I'm most impressed by the fact that you've really interpreted your own fiction, Jon. This is imaginative but also coherent — and it achieves an emotional development — not as a relatively minor point: the storyboard's help. But you could easily improve the clarity by thinking in terms of shots instead of actions within the shots. As director you place camera, roll film, and cut. The script can use



- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 1 | A black background for three seconds | Silence |
| 2 | A black background onto which red letters fade in: Chance Bringor. After six seconds they fade out. | Silence |
| 3 | A black background for three seconds | Silence |
| 4 | A black background onto which red letters fade in: John Smith as Chance. After six seconds they fade out. | Silence |
| 5 | A black background for three seconds | Silence |
| 6 | A black background onto which red letters fade in: John Doe as Stan. After six seconds they fade out. | Silence |
| 7 | A black background for three seconds | Silence |
| 8 | A black background onto which red letters fade in: Joe Shmo. After six seconds they fade out. | Silence |
| 9 | A black background for three seconds | All natural sounds and the rattle of a combination lock |
| 10 | The camera has theoretically been sitting at chest level in a high school locker; the door opens to reveal the shirt of a baseball uniform worn by a teenager. | All natural sounds and the squeak of a locker door opening
An angry male adult voice says: "Hey! Do you have a pass?" |
| 11 | The boy moves back a step and turns to face his accuser. The camera moves out into the otherwise empty hall and faces the accuser at chest level; it is a thin, middle-aged administrator in a conservative suit and tie; he looks mean, annoyed, and demanding. | All natural sounds and the intimidated boy says, "Uh . . ." |
| 12 | Without stopping, the camera moves toward the administrator and avoids him by serving to one side. | All natural sounds |



- 13 Once past the administrator, the camera moves to eye level as it continues down the locker-lined hallway.

The narrator sincerely and thoughtfully says: **"By the age of fourteen, Chance Bringor comprehended"**



- 14 When it reaches a T intersection, it focuses on a picture of Chance shaking hands with the President; the administrator stands next to Chance. Chance looks bored, but the administrator beams.

The murmur of a talking crowd can just barely be heard and the narrator continues: **"the superiority of his intelligence and the insignificance of his existence; it made him a poor companion for lunch."**



- 15 The camera slides sideways along the award hall. Chance's name is on many of the plaques, and his picture appears several times in team photos and individual shots.

Four seconds of the murmuring which is getting louder The murmuring which is getting louder and the narrator continues: **"At times he held the entire planet in such contempt that he would have destroyed every particle and vacuum without remorse, yet at other times he wept out of pity;"**



- 16 The wall ends, and the camera proceeds in its original direction. It enters the cafeteria which is filled with high school students sitting on tables with attached benches eating hot lunches with sporks. Every bench has at least two students sitting on it except for one. Several teachers are standing in the cafeteria.

All natural sounds and the narrator continues: **"either way I got his French fries. [Three second pause] Stan wasn't so lucky; that's probably why he was the one who spoke against Chance on"**



- 17 The camera moves to the center of the cafeteria and does a three hundred and sixty degree pan as fast as possible without blurring.

All natural sounds and the narrator continues: **"one of his rare absences"**



- 18 The camera then dips to the eye level of the two eaters at the nearest table; they face each other. No one else is at their section of the table.

All natural sounds



- 19 The camera moves to get Stan's point of view of the narrator.

All natural sounds and Stan animatedly complains: **"He glides up to the table and seats himself while serenely gazing at us with a steely look that says, [Factually] 'I am the best in the world, yet I will join you for a meal"**

You number 20s; not movement within a shot



20 The narrator stares at the table as he thinks over the past deeply.



21 He looks Stan in the eye.



22 He looks at the table.



23 He raises his head.



24 The camera swings *good* violently around and back to get the narrator's view of Stan. Stan sags to the table's top.



25 Stan sits properly.



26 Stan leans to the side until he is barely visible; he is reclined on the bench.

and conversation.' [Earnestly inquiring] Why do we let him?"

The narrator replies knowingly: "Because when he's like that he wants to know what's going on in our lives. It's the only time he'll really listen if we talk about my band's latest gig or how short some girl's skirt was."

Stan argues: "Was there ever a day like that when he laughed with us?"

All natural sounds for four seconds

All natural sounds and the narrator says: "Well, no."

All natural sounds and the narrator mumbles: "He usually looks down his nose at us like we're stupid low-lives."

All natural sounds and the narrator speaks passionately to defend Chance: "But he laughs sometimes when we try to cheer him up."

All natural sounds and Stan animatedly informs the narrator: "THOSE are the days when he drags in here on sheer inertia and practically collapses on the bench under the weight of the futility of life."

All natural sounds and Stan explains: "If we didn't try to rally whatever good spirits he has, he'd lose the motivation to leave at the bell and sit"

All natural sounds and Stan continues: "here until he [Heavily:] died."

The narrator laughs.

The narrator says: "Ooh, you like him! You KNOW he needs us; everyone else expects him to be The Best."



27 Stan sits properly and uses refined and controlled hand gestures. The camera moves back to the position between the two and to the side. The narrator seems to be looking for something.

All natural sounds and Stan lectures: **"Exactly. his teachers, church, family, society, classmates, and even and especially himself expect him to balance on so many razor edges of choice that every moral or intellectual slip leaves him bleeding."**



28 The two look intently at each other without moving.

All natural sounds and the narrator asks with extreme interest: **"Speaking of red stuff, are you going to use your catsup?"**



29 Stan tosses a packet of catsup to the narrator with contempt.

All natural sounds.



30 As the narrator squeezes the catsup out of the packet, the camera moves to get Stan's point of view of the narrator.

All natural sounds and Stan continues: **"[Angrily:] It comes down to this: [Calmly and firmly] Chance can either dance in the spotlights of his brilliance**



31 The narrator finishes with the catsup and pops a fry in his mouth.

All natural sounds and Stan continues: **"or be incapacitated by the insanity of the deep shadows."**



32 The narrator reaches for his milk, delivers his line, and takes a long drink. After Stan's yelp, the picture ripples into a blur.

All natural sounds and the narrator says calmly and firmly: **"Wrong. Chance can either be incapacitated or dance in his shadows."**
Stan yelps: **"What?!"**



33

good
The wavy blur clears to a classroom with about twenty teens sitting at desks in rank and file facing the teacher's desk; she sits at the desk. Behind the students are large windows. Above her desk is the clock. Chance and the narrator are sitting in the first row in front of the teacher's desk. The camera is at the eye level of the sitting students, to the teacher's side, just far enough away from the teacher to fit the teacher and two protagonists in the same frame; both the narrator and Chance are visible. The students are all dressed similarly; for example, they might all be wearing blue jeans and t-shirts (with and without graphics) ranging in color from purple to chartreuse (cool colors). Chance is dressed slightly differently; for example, he might wear black jeans and a red t-shirt.

All natural sounds and Frau Schmitt enthusiastically instructs: "...so as I read this story aloud, follow along in your book, and try to learn the rhythm of the spoken language as well as the meaning of the words."



34

German dict
All of the students open their books and follow along except Chance. Each of the other students has nothing on his desk except the book. Chance's book is closed, and he slowly writes on the open page in his notebook. The narrator glances at Chance.

All natural sounds and Frau Schmitt animatedly reads in German: "[Translated] **Settle thy studies, Faustus, and begin/ To sound the depth of that thou wilt profess. / Having commenced, be a divine in show, / Yet level at the end of every art / And live and die in Aristotle's works: / Sweet Analytics, 'tis thou hast ravished me! / Bene disserere est finis logicis— / Is to dispute well logic's chiefest end? / Affords this art no greater miracle? / Than read no more; thou hast attained that end. / A greater subject fitteth Faustus' wit: / Bid on kai me on farewell, Galen come, / Seeing ubi desinit philosophus, ibi incipit medicus; / Be a physician, Faustus, heap up gold / And be eternized for some wondrous cure. / Summum bonum medicinae sanitas— / The end of physic is our bodies' health: / Why, Faustus, hast thou not attained that end? / Is not thy common talk sound aphorisms? / Are not thy bills hung up as monuments / Whereby whole cities have escaped the plague / And thousand desperate maladies been eased? / Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man. / Couldst thou make men to live**



- 35 Chance calmly places his pen down and slowly turns to look out the window. The narrator stealthily peers at Chance's writing.



- 36 Cut to a close-up of extremely neat handwriting that states: "Once upon a time there was a little box. It did nothing, and no one asked it to do anything. This made the little box happy. The End."



- 37 Cut to the previous view. The narrator turns to look at Chance.



- 38 Frau Schmitt stops reading and looks up at Chance. She then looks at the narrator who shrugs.



- 39 Frau Schmitt resumes reading.



- 40 *long shot*
Cut to view of the class from height of six feet in Chance's line of sight. Several of the students look at Chance.



- 41 Cut to previous view. Frau Schmitt stops reading and looks up at Chance. She then looks at the narrator who shrugs.



- 42 Frau Schmitt resumes reading.

eternally / Or, being dead, raise them to life again,"

All natural sounds and Frau Schmitt animatedly reads in German: "[Translated] Then this profession were to be esteemed. / Physic, farewell. Where is Justinian? / *Si una eademque res legatur duobus, / Alter rem, alter valorem rei, etc.*"

All natural sounds and Frau Schmitt animatedly reads in German: "[Translated] A petty case of paltry legacies! / *Exhaereditare filium non potest pater nisi-* / Such is the subject of the Institute / And universal body of the law. / This study fits a mercenary drudge / Who aims at nothing but external trash,"

All natural sounds and Frau Schmitt animatedly reads in German: "[Translated] Too servile and illiberal for me. / When all is done, divinity is best."

All natural sounds

All natural sounds and Frau Schmitt reads in German: "[Translated] Jerome's Bible, Faustus, view it well: / *Stipendium peccati mors est - Ha! Stipendium, etc.*"

All natural sounds and Frau Schmitt reads in German: "[Translated] The reward of sin is death? That's hard. / *Si pecasse negamus, fallimur, et nulla est in nobis veritas--*"

All natural sounds

All natural sounds and Frau Schmitt reads in German:



- 43 Cut to view of the class from height of six feet in Chance's line of sight. The same students and others look at Chance.



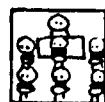
- 44 Cut to previous view. Frau Schmitt stops reading and looks up at Chance. She asks him the question. She looks at the narrator who shrugs.



- 45 Frau Schmitt resumes reading.



- 46 Cut to view of Chance from the point of view of the student two seats behind the narrator. The narrator waves his hand in front of Chance's face. Chance does not respond in any way.



- 47 Cut to view of the class from height of six feet in Chance's line of sight. Many students look out the window and turn back to the book with puzzled looks.



- 48 Cut to Chance's point of view out the window. He sees greenery, but he mostly sees blue sky with birds flying.



- 49 Cut to the camera at the eye level of the sitting students just far enough away from the teacher to fit the teacher and the two protagonists in the same frame; both the narrator and Chance are visible; the camera is

"[Translated] If we say that we have no sin / We deceive ourselves, and there's no truth in us."

All natural sounds and Frau Schmitt reads in German: "[Translated] **Why then belike/ We must sin and so consequently die, / Aye, we must die an everlasting death.**"

All natural sounds
All natural sounds and Frau Schmitt says in English: "**Is something wrong, Chance?**"
All natural sounds

All natural sounds and Frau Schmitt reads in German: "[Translated] **What doctrine call you this, *Che sera, sera*: / What will be, shall be? Divinity, adieu!**"

All natural sounds and Frau Schmitt reads in German: "[Translated] **These metaphysics of magicians / And necromantic books are heavenly:**"

All natural sounds and Frau Schmitt says in English: "**Is something wrong, Chance?**"

All natural sounds and Frau Schmitt reads in German: "[Translated] **Lines, circles, signs, letters, and characters— / Aye these are those that Faustus most desires.**"

All natural sounds
All natural sounds and Frau Schmitt says: "**Is something wrong, Chance? Would you like to go see your guidance counselor?**"



50

Frau Schmitt continues to stare at the door.

51

The camera moves in front of the teacher and turns up at the clock which shows a time in early afternoon (e.g. 1:40)

52

The camera lowers its angle to center on Frau Schmitt reading.

53

The camera raises its angle to center on the clock which shows it is twenty minutes later.

54

The camera turns 180 degrees as quickly as possible without blurring as it moves toward the board; it should now approximate the teacher's point of view. One of the students addresses the narrator as all the students quickly leave the room.

55

The camera zooms in on the narrator's left eye.

one (abstract) picture
from 2nd 0

All natural sounds

Frau Schmitt whispers: "How rude!"

Frau Schmitt reads in German: "[Translated] Of what a world of profit and delight, / Of power, of honor, of omnipotence, / Is promised to the studious artisan!"

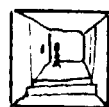
Frau Schmitt reads in German: "[Translated] All things that move between the quiet poles / Shall be at my command."

School bell

A student asks the narrator: "Do you want a ride home?"

The narrator replies: "No, I'm going to look for the loon."

Silence



56

The camera is at eye level peering down a white school hallway lined with lockers. Stan is midway down the corridor talking to a fire extinguisher handle at face-height. A book and notebook are at his feet. The corridor ends in glass so he and it are mostly silhouettes, and the white tile and metal lockers contribute to the effect.

Silence



57

Stan squats.

Silence



58

Chance's leg emerges from the wall.

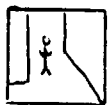
Silence



59

The camera swings to the left and turns right to look at the narrator's profiled head. The narrator is still watching what the camera watched.

Silence



60

The narrator turns his back to the camera and runs down the perpendicular corridor.

"Root Beer Rag" and all natural sounds



61

When the narrator's whole body is visible or he is ten feet away (whichever occurs last), the camera follows smoothly at a consistent distance.

"Root Beer Rag" and all natural sounds



62

The narrator will enter the second open doorway on the left and be lost to sight. The camera proceeds to the doorway and turns into the doorway in a gentle curve. This results in a quick pan of the unoccupied classroom as the narrator has run straight from the doorway.

"Root Beer Rag" and all natural sounds



63

The narrator opens a window. The chasing camera now closes the distance to focus on his upper body and head. To do this the camera lowers to chest height.

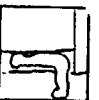
"Root Beer Rag" and all natural sounds



64

The narrator slips out the window.

"Root Beer Rag" and all natural sounds



65

Cut to the same view of the narrator except from outside.

"Root Beer Rag" and all natural sounds

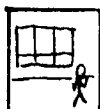
Where's the camera?
or 2



66

The narrator drops to the ground and turns to continue in the same direction as the camera swings up to eye level and to the left as it turns right.

"Root Beer Rag" and all natural sounds



67

The narrator runs to an window half-way along the wall perpendicular to the one through which he just traveled. As before, the camera gives him a head start,

"Root Beer Rag" and all natural sounds



68

Follows at a steady distance,

"Root Beer Rag" and all natural sounds



69

And closes in on him and lowers to chest height as he widens the window.

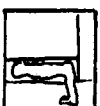
"Root Beer Rag" and all natural sounds



70

The camera views him slipping through the window from the outside.

"Root Beer Rag" and all natural sounds



71

Cut to same view from inside the classroom.

"Root Beer Rag" and all natural sounds



72

The narrator climbs to the floor and turns to cross the room as the camera swings up to eye level and to the left as it turns right.

"Root Beer Rag" and all natural sounds



73

The narrator crosses to the closed door. He starts fully erect but lowers to a squat as he nears the door. The camera lowers with his eyes. As before, the camera gives him a head start,

"Root Beer Rag" fades steadily as he lowers and nears the door and all natural sounds



74

Follows at a steady distance,

"Root Beer Rag" fading and natural sounds



75

And closes in on him as he stops before the door. As he slowly raises his eyes to the door's window, the camera changes its view from his profile to

"Root Beer Rag" is inaudible just as the narrator stops. All natural sounds



76

His point of view. During this exchange, Chance is restlessly lethargic and makes hand and arm gestures

Chance pleads: "Help me. I don't know what to do." Stan questions in a flat, reasonable tone: "Do you have

that imply that nothing matters because life is hopeless.
Stan's expression is one of concern and seriousness.

any homework due tomorrow?"

Chance replies desperately: "Yes. Reams and reams of assignments, and I can't find my pencil."

Stan questions in a flat, reasonable tone: "Do you need use the library for anything due tomorrow?"

Chance reasons but then slides to desperation after the word history: "Yes. History, but I lost my pencil." No word in the last four should be stressed more than the rest of the four.

Stan questions in a flat, reasonable tone: "Do you need to get anything from your locker?"

Chance replies in a flat, reasonable tone: "No. I lost my pencil." There is still no stress on any one word.

Stan's smile makes his tone lighter and humorously over important: "You can have this one. O.K."

Stan continues: "First, you need to stand up out here and wipe the dust off yourself."

Chance giggles in a release of tension.

The squeak of sneakers on tile

Stan seriously instructs: "Second, go get your history homework done."

Silence



77

The camera moves past the window but otherwise maintains the same view. Stan smiles at the importance Chance places on the loss of a pencil, extracts one from his back pocket, and extends it to Chance who reaches to accept it gratefully. Chance pockets it.



78

Stan offers his hand as he speaks. Chance accepts it and stands in the hall; in the process, the camera starts to zoom in on the hands but turns down to Chance's shoe near the history book.



79

The text on American history fills the screen.



80 The camera zooms out from the book to reveal it sitting in a bedroom on a desk next to a closed door featuring a poster of Edgar Allen Poe. It is night, and the shade is down. The light has a reddish tinge. The room is small and extremely crowded with objects. The camera turns to Chance's profile. He is putting a tape in a dual cassette player as if a tape were not already playing; the narrator is in the background sitting on the foot of the bed which has innumerable teddy bears near the head.



81 After picking a jar of red liquid from a shelf above the player, Chance turns from the tape player to face the narrator. The camera turns with him so that his face becomes framed, but the camera zooms out so Chance upper body is also visible; Chance leans on the desk showing the jar to the narrator.



82 Cut to Chance's screen saver on his computer which was in the background of the previous shot. The screen saver is a realistic, pulsating heart that drifts around the screen and "bounces" off the edges.



83 Cut to a clear container of Kool-aid that Chance waves around as he nonverbally offers it to the narrator. It is assumed that he declines, because Chance only fills one glass.

"The 1812 Overture"

"The 1812 Overture" and Chance says: **"This . . . is the blood of my dog Harvey."**

"Temptation" begins (All three sound sources have the same average volume) Chance says: **"I collected it as he was dying. [Reminiscing:] He was the greatest hunting dog there ever was. He had never been trained, but if you shot it, he'd retrieve it. When we took him down to my uncle's ranch, we went into the ravines. My uncle shot a badger. Harvey ran to bring it to us. The badger was only wounded, and it mortally wounded Harvey."**

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance says: **"I named him after the Harvey that demonstrated in 1628 that blood circulated continuously between the heart and the rest of the body. Blood comprises a serous plasma, nine-tenths water, in which proteins, carbohydrates, and salts -together with waste substances as dissolved. One pound in every fourteen pounds of body weight is blood. In invertebrates it may be colorless."**

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance says: **"But in invertebrates it is red -red like this Kool-aid. Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood**



84 Cut to the narrator with a look on his face that shows he does not follow Chance's thought process and feels he must watch Chance closely. This shot is from the narrator's neck level between Chance and the narrator and includes the narrator's upper body.



85 Cut to a full view of Chance from the floor between Chance and the bed. Chance makes his butterfly knife flash in the light and dance.



86 Cut to two naked swords crossed over a poster of a volcano oozing lava.



87 Cut to metal plaque of the Ten Commandments on engraved tablets.



88 Cut to cloth of the boy scout pledge.



89 Cut to Chance's impassioned and earnest face.



90 Cut to the narrator's wide, wide eyes.



91 Cut to the flipping and flashing blade.

of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance says: **"I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom."** Matthew 26: 27-29"

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance says: **"Now there is not any man that can sacrifice his own blood which will atone for the sins of another."** Alma 34: 11. **"Therefore, it is expedient that there should be a"**

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance gradually gets louder as he says: **"great and last sacrifice."** Alma 34: 13. **"Sacrifices and libations were offered to the gods of Greece and Rome"**

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance, getting louder, says: **"and the god of the Hebrews. Blood is the payment deities accept. It pays for all sins"**

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance, getting louder, says: **"and buys the way to the Elysian Fields or the feasting hall of fallen warriors!"**

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"Know that our years are the years of War"**

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"And our days are measured as battles"**

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"And every hour is a Life"**



92 Cut to star chart on the ceiling.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"Lost to the Outside"**



93 Cut to model of the universe hanging from the ceiling viewed at its level toward the nearby wall which has a poster of Shakespeare there.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"Those from Without"**



94 Cut to bug collection in a case mounted on the wall.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"Have builder up charnel houses"**



95 Cut to open pocket knife sitting on sheets of solved calculus problems on desk.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"To nourish the fiends of Tiamat"**



96 Cut to top view of a desk drawer overflowing with certificates and medals.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"And the Blood of the weakest here"**



97 Cut to flashing knife.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"Is libation unto Tiamat"**



98 Cut to formal photograph of Chance's mother.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"Queen of the Ghouls!"**



99 Cut to formal photograph of Chance's father.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"Wrecker of Pain!"**



100 Cut to Chance's face.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"And to invoke her"**



101 Cut to taxidermic bat hanging in a corner near the ceiling.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"The Red Water of Life"**



102 Cut to spines of geology books on a shelf.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"Need to be spilt on a stone"**



103 Cut to flipping and flashing knife.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"The stone struck with a sword"**

*good stuff
along the line
effect*



104 Cut to human skeleton hanging on closet door.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: "**That hath slain eleven**"



105 Cut to class pictures of pretty girls in a scattered pile on the desk.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: "**men / Sacrifices**"



106 Cut to Chance's face.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: "**to Hubur / So that**"



107 Cut to violin resting on its closed case.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: "**the strike ringh**"



108 Cut to flipping and flashing knife.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: "**out / And call**"



109 Cut to crucifix and rosary on wall flanked by a poster of Madonna and a poster of a heavy metal band.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: "**Tiamat**"



110 Cut to working red lava lamp on desk.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance saying: "**from her**"



111 Cut to Chance's face.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: "**slumber**"



112 Cut to flipping and flashing knife.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: "**From her**"



113 Cut to bird's nest on shelf with books entitled in Latin behind it.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: "**sleep in the**"



114 Cut to a rat running in wheel of a Habitrail cage.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: "**Caverns**"



115 Cut to Chance's face.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: "**Of the Earth!**"



116 Cut to flipping and flashing knife.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"Necronomicon!"**



117 Cut to bottles of chemicals lined on a shelf; they are prominently marked with the skull and crossbones and Mr. Yuck.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"The Book"**



118 Cut to Chance's face.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"of the"**



119 Cut to flipping and flashing knife.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"Dead!"**



120 Cut to lava lamp.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"The Book"**



121 Cut to Chance's face.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"of the"**



122 Cut to flipping and flashing knife.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"Black"**



123 Cut to taxidermic fox.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"Earth"**



124 Cut to Chance's face.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"that was"**



125 Cut to flipping and flashing knife.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"writ in"**



126 Cut to Chance's face.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"peril!"**



127 Cut to view of the narrator from Chance's point of view

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance



128 Cut to Chance's face.

shouts: **"He was lain, / But his blood"**



129 Camera zooms out to include the flipping and flashing knife.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"cried out to"**

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"the Abode of Heaven!"**



Cut to rat.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"She filled their"**



130 Cut to Chance's face

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"bodies with venom"**



131 Cut to lava lamp.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"for blood. Blood!"**



132 Cut to face of large and cute teddy bear.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"Roaring dragons"**



133 Cut to flipping and flashing knife.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"she has clothed"**



134 Cut to boy scout banner.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance shouts: **"with Terror--Ooww!!"**

The **smack** of the knife on a magazine page



135 Cut to butterfly knife laying on a magazine open to a full page picture of a magnified flea.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation"



136 The camera pulls back to show Chance's upper body as he reaches for and picks up the magazine to look at the flea.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance recites conversationally and thoughtfully: **"Marke but this flea, and marke in this, / How little that which thou deniest me is; / Me it suck'd first,"**

*you're brilliant, real
person, of course, but
you can only carry
your stupidity so
far without
messing the
movie*



137 The camera keeps the magazine in the center of the view as Chance flips it onto the narrator who ignores the magazine and is staring at Chance.



138 Cut to his point of view of Chance.



139 Chance looks at his bleeding finger.



140 As Chance walks over to the desk for a tissue, the camera turns to look at the narrator's face and quickly pulls up and to the far wall to view him as a small figure lying with his head surrounded by bears.



141 The narrator jumps up and rushes toward the door as he makes his parting remark.



142 Chance sits on the bed, applying direct pressure to his finger.



143 The camera zooms in on the back of the narrator's head.

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance says: **"and now sucks thee,"**

"The 1812 Overture" and "Temptation" and Chance says: **"And in this flea, our two bloods mingled be' John Donne."**

After Joel sings saint, the tapes click off loudly.

Chance sensibly states: **"Applying direct pressure will stop the bleeding."**

Silence

All natural sounds and the narrator hastily mumbles: **"I have to go – what with school and all tomorrow."**

All natural sounds and Chance calls to correct him: **"Tomorrow's Saturday!"**

Silence



144 The back of the narrator's head fills the frame.

Stan's incredulous "What?!" is repeated with all natural noises.



145 The camera moves up to peer over the narrator's head at Stan then swings around to get Stan's point of view of the narrator's milk-obstructed face.

All natural noises



146 The narrator puts down his milk and repeats his statement with a facial expression of superiority.

All natural noises and the narrator says with exaggerated politeness: "I said, 'Chance is capable of dancing in the shadows.'"



147 The camera slides to a position between and farther from the two. Stan gestures to a place behind the narrator.

All natural noises and Stan casually remarks: "The superintendent just walked through with Mrs. and Mr. Bringor. [Angry at the injustice:] They ought to have the other children taken away after the way they've handled Chance."

The narrator objects: "They LOVE him."



148 Stan uses hand gestures, but they are refined and controlled.

All natural noises and Stan details his informative rebuttal slowly and haltingly as if he composes it as he speaks: "Chance has a well-developed sense of balance in morality, ethics, sexuality, religion, education, and everything else, and they have tried so hard to discipline and train and mold him that his whole psychological being is twisted into knots. Even their knots tie him into knots;"



149 The camera slides closer to Stan while turning to face the narrator and then starts to zoom in on the narrator's face.

All natural noises and Stan continues: "his sense of honor tells him to love and embrace his parents, but his sense of justice tells him to despise them and distance"



150 The zoom stops when just the eyes fill the frame.

All natural noises and Stan continues: "himself."
Silence for three seconds



151 An extreme close-up of the narrator's eyes



152 The camera slowly zooms out appearing to move five feet straight up to reveal the narrator talking on the phone lying on a true blue bedspread on his bed in his large room. The walls are painted white; the furniture is heavy designs in a dark wood; the wall to wall carpet is cream. There is no clutter and few loose objects. There are no curtains nor shades, and it is daylight; a typical suburban backyard can be seen through the window.



153 While the narrator talks and changes positions on the bed, the camera smoothly explores the room and focuses on the poster of a modern fighting plane photographed from above the plane which is above hazy, blue clouds,



154 Focuses on the wide, flat, wood cross hanging alone on the wall,



155 Focuses on the tasteful poster of a beautiful, female singer in a sexy pose,



156 And focuses on the two or three sports trophies on a shelf next to high-quality illustrated books of sports, planes, animals, and natural wonders.



157 The camera returns to the narrator who is sitting on the foot of the bed. The camera is at his eye level, and he is seen from the waist up.

The narrator animatedly says: "I"

All natural sounds and the narrator animatedly says: **"assumed this was another reference to Stan's Razor Edge theory, so I said nothing. I, too, had seen Chance's schizophrenic relations with his parents."**

All natural sounds and the narrator animatedly says: **"One week he would practically beg them to attend one of his ball games, yet in the next week, he might keep a parent's night secret."**

All natural sounds and the narrator animatedly says: **"I just figured he had a pattern too fancy for me to understand. Anyway, it turns out that Chance was absent from lunch that day for a very good reason."**

All natural sounds for five seconds.

All natural sounds and the narrator humbly says: **"I guess most of Chance's patterns that were too fancy for me to understand were really plain and simple desperate confusion,"**

All natural sounds and the narrator animatedly says: **"but I don't think that's what I should say in my speech. Stan has already written a good share of my speech, but I always forget half of his long sentences."**

All natural sounds and the narrator animatedly says: **"I'll probably just say whatever comes to mind until I remember Stan's next phrase. Stan said he and I have a**



158 He falls back on the bed. The camera moves with him so that its relation to him remains the same.



159 He is looking at the ceiling, holding the phone to his right ear with his right hand.



160 He moves the phone to his left ear, but continues to hold it with his right hand.



161 He reaches up to rub or scratch his right shoulderblade with his left hand, just as his arms are crossed like the dead

responsibility to keep to the truth even if it isn't all wonderful,"

All natural sounds and the narrator animatedly says: "and"

All natural sounds and the narrator animatedly says: "I don't figure Chance would mind"

All natural sounds and the narrator animatedly says: "to much"

All natural sounds and the narrator animatedly says: "if I'm myself at"



162 Cut to Chance in the same position in a coffin lined in true blue material.



163 The camera zooms in on Chance's face.



164 The camera tilts up to view the narrator in a standard teenage suit and tie speaking at a podium; he has no notes. The church has around twenty pew rows; the pew on each side of the center aisle is twelve feet long. The windows on each side of the church are clear, but they are placed just high enough so that only blue sky is visible. The decor is very simple with varnished tan wood trim. The flowers are potted white orchids.



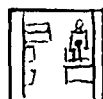
165 The camera turns toward Stan's face; he is sitting in the first pew in front of the podium. Chance's parents can be seen weeping in the background.



166 Stan sighs and smiles slightly while looking heavenward and shaking his head slightly.



167 The camera turns toward the narrator's face while moving out the center aisle. All of the pews are half-filled with mourners; the mourners are of all ages and dressed in dark grey, blue, and black.



168 The camera backs right out the open door.



169 The camera continues backing up, but it is now traveling at a diagonal to its previous path and is traveling

The narrator continues: **"his funeral."**

A barely audible electric organ slowly plays "He Lives" in a low octave, and the narrator sincerely says **"By the age of fourteen, Chance Bringor"**

"He Lives" and the narrator continues: **"comprehended the superiority of his intelligence and the insignificance of his existence; [Three second pause] It made him a poor companion for lunch."**

"He Lives" and the narrator continues: **"At times he held the entire planet in such contempt that he would have destroyed every particle and vacuum without remorse, yet at other times he wept out of pity; [Three second pause] either way I got his French"**

"He Lives" and the narrator continues: **"fries. He could fascinate anyone"**

"He Lives" and the narrator continues: **"with his mental ballet through the spotlights of his brilliance and through the deep shadows of insanity; [Three second pause] I never understood a word he said. Chance could create the most elaborate thesis or solve the hardest math problem, but he might spend two or three class"**

"He Lives" and the narrator continues: **"periods"**

"He Lives" and the narrator continues: **"staring into space; [Three second pause] I guess he was thinking. All**

upwards; the church doors remain at the center of the screen. The church is painted white, has a sloped roof with white singles, and has a steeple. It is in a suburban neighborhood. On the sidewalk in front of the house next to the church, a male toddler is playing happily.



170

The camera stops; it will be higher than the steeple's top.



171

The objects in the frame are frozen. The credits scroll up from the bottom; they are red letters in Los Angeles font.

he wanted was love, and that was the one thing no one knew how to give him because he wouldn't let anyone give it to him; there were days I should have hugged him anyway. The future promised Chance wealth, fame, and honors, yet he envisioned only the opposite: a long, lonely, and poverty-stricken life." When he says life, the organ music ends.

Three seconds of **silence**

The narrator continues: "I guess that's why he slit his wrists."

Silence for ten seconds.

"My Life" by [illegible]